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Book Control

When even the "liberals" begin to be concerned about the growing bureaucratic control of reading matter, it is time to sit up and take notice. It is a well-known fact that many of the most school text books and books placed in "public" libraries are written or selected to reflect the political line while downgrading the ideas of individual freedom and the free market economy.

Not so well-known is the fact that many books bought from public bookstores or non-market stands, as well as those ordered by mail, have been secretly subsidized by the government and, thus, their contents in varying degrees controlled.

Two government agencies, the USIA and the CIA, seem to have been particularly active in this field. And even the notoriously "liberal" Washington Post is beginning to show some concern. In an article written by Geoffrey Wolff entitled "Government Book Control — How the USIA and CIA Use Private Publishers To Influence Public Opinion," in its February 5, 1967 issue, the Post documented case after case of the government subsidizing, censoring, and influencing the contents and distribution of books.

"There is much evidence," Wolff wrote, "that books are used increasingly as engines of propaganda, that highly-placed persons are pre-censoring books they find repellent or embarrassing, and that they are commissioning and controlling the writing of books without disclosing the facts of such control."

Wolff then went on to quote Reed Harris, Director of the USIA Information Center Service, as admitting before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations that, "We control the things (books) from the very idea down to the final edited manuscript."

Commenting on Harris' testimony, Wolff observed:

"Perhaps the books are accurate and valuable, perhaps they are self-serving or meretricious; what is certain is that they do not tell the reader what he surely wants to know: that they are works which the USIA admits would never have been written without Government support and would not have been released by commercial publishing houses without subsidization — either because they were unworthy of publication or they were unmarketable."

The CIA, despite the fact that it is unlawful for this agency to operate in an intelligence-gathering or information-disseminating capacity in the United States, appears also to be deeply involved. In addition to the recent scandal about its financial support of the politically active National Student Association.

"Recently, for example," the Post article charged, "Mr. George Carver wrote for the highly respected (sic) periodical Foreign Affairs an article supporting our official policy toward North and South Vietnam. Mr. Carver is with the CIA, but this crucial information was not related by Foreign Affairs. Worse, it is possible that it (the information) was not given to the magazine."

There was much more information in the Post article showing that, without doubt, the government is deeply and persistently involved in attempts at thought control using, of course, your tax money.

However, all of this is not really surprising. We should know by now that, when some people are given the power to appropriate the earnings of other people, the funds thus obtained will be used to expand and perpetuate the system while, at the same time, being used also to silence or play down any criticism of what is going on.

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